DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 357 490 EA 024 921

AUTHOR Doyle, Denis P.
TITLE Education Policy for the 1980s and Beyond: A National Perspective. Education Policy Studies Occasional Papers. EPS 83, No. 5.
INSTITUTION American Enterprise Inst. for Public Policy Research, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Jun 83
NOTE 37p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Change; *Educational Policy; *Educational Principles; *Educational Theories; Elementary Secondary Education; Federal Regulation; *Federal State Relationship; Modernism; *Politics of Education; Private Schools; Public Schools; School Choice; *School Role

ABSTRACT

The quality of elementary and secondary education was the most important issue for the American public in the 1980s. The nation's economic health, social well-being, political viability, and international standing depend to a great degree on the success of our education system. As well as ensuring equal opportunity for all Americans, schools help provide students with the skills needed in a knowledge-based society. Two institutional barriers exist to improving the education system: the beliefs that education should not be political, and that education is a science. Education is necessarily political. Many of the conflicts in education result from a mistaken belief that modernist changes to education are technical rather than political. Education must be guided by deeper purposes: conservativism, liberty, discipline, continued learning, and individual development. The other major barrier to education improvement is the belief that education is a science, and not an art. Treating education as a science has led to the institutionalization of the suspension of judgment at the lower levels. More money is not the solution to educational excellence; reallocation of money is. The federal government must provide support and guidance for the research and analytical activities of individual schools and states. (Contains 39 references.) (JPT)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

EA

American Enterprise Institute
Public Policy Week

ED357490

# EDUCATION POLICY FOR THE 1980s AND BEYOND:

# A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

By: Denis P. Doyle

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

R. Getrich

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

EA 024 921

40th year

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

AEI

American Enterprise Institute

# Education Policy for the 1980s and Beyond:

# A National Perspective

by
Denis P. Doyle

June 1983

Education Policy Studies Occasional Papers
EPS 83, No. 5

None of the opinions contained herein should be taken to reflect the views of anyone other than the author(s).

This paper was commissioned by the Center for National Policy and first appeared in their publication, Educating Our Citizens: The Search for Excellence, in the Summer of 1983.

On the occasion of the American Enterprise Institute's fortieth anniversary and seventh annual Public Policy Week, the AEI Education Policy Studies Program initiates a series of Occasional Papers in Education.

Included are papers prepared by AEI staff and consultants, as well as other papers identified by AEI's Education Policy Studies Program as being of special interest to the education community.

—Denis P. Doyle
Director, Education Policy Studies

Culture is activity of thought, and receptiveness to beauty and humane feeling. Scraps of information have nothing to do with it. A merely well-informed man is the most useless bore on God's earth. What we should aim at producing is men who possess both culture and expert knowledge in some special direction. Their expert knowledge will give them the ground to start from, and their culture will lead them as deep as philosophy and as high as art.

—Alfred North Whitehead
The Aims of Education

INTRODUCTION

The nature and scope of elementary and secondary education is the central domestic question of the decade. No more important issue is before the American people. Our economic health, our social well being, our political viability, and our position of international preeminence flow from the quality of our citizenry. And that quality is in large measure a product of schooling. It is necessary to reemphasize this simple truth because for more than a decade many American educators, intellectuals, and policy analysts had come to believe that schools do not make a difference, that the crucial background characteristics of race, sex, ethnicity, income, and social class were all-important. While these are clearly important, the school is the one public institution which can overcome the effects of background. Which school a child attends makes a difference because schools make a difference. And given a choice, thoughtful teachers, parents, and students select certain schools because they are convinced they make a difference.

In light of the popular image of schools in disarray, it comes as a relief to report that the news is not all bad: in isolated areas student test scores have begun to climb; real strides are being made by individual schools and school districts; some states are making changes in their teacher licensing requirements; and Americans who live in villages and towns still give their public schools high marks.

Even social science research, which has provided little comfort of late, reports good news. Recent findings in major studies by James Coleman, Andrew Greeley, and Michael Rutter confirm what every parent knows to be true--that, all things being equal, schools do make a difference. School effects are real and can be measured.[1]

As well, over the past two decades, schools have played a major role in assuring equal opportunity for Americans of all walks of life. As an instrument of social mobility and opportunity, public schools have produced remarkable achievements in extending education to the broadest range of students in history.

Another dimension of schooling, "human capital formation," enjoys great currency today; indeed, this awkward term provides a useful point of departure for policy discussion. In the past, human capital carried with it the specter of arcane theory or vocationalism. Times have changed. The term human capital is entering the public dialogue because of the clear need for acquired skills in the 1980s and 90s, as the knowledge-based society becomes established.

The creation of wealth, as the former CEO of Koppers Company, Fletcher Byrom, suggests, is business's principal purpose, and the major means of creating wealth is trained intelligence.[2]

The point is that schools are worth supporting precisely because they have effects. The public believes this and will support school programs they believe to be reasonable and effective.

The demographic realities of the post-industrial, knowledge-based world set the stage for major social change: over the next two decades, two out of three new entries into the labor force will be women and minorities. No firm in America that fails to deal with the consequences of this shift can compete in domestic or international markets; the capacity to attract qualified women and minorities will flow from demonstrated commitment to equal opportunity. Rhetoric will not suffice.

The need to emphasize education, then, is clear; and the opportunities inherent in successfully emphasizing it are also clear. What, then, are the barriers to improving American education? The question is not an idle one: Americans are invincible optimists and are convinced that this is the best of all possible worlds. They are eager to embrace new ideas and will support change that fires the imagination.

In education there is no constituency for low standards, for dismay and decay; there are no advocacy groups in Washington or state capitals in favor of truancy, vandalism, and declining test scores. Yet these conditions exist. No one knows teachers who prefer failure to success, school board members who do not hope and plan for the best; principal who do not mean well. Significant problems exist in American education because of institutional barriers to excellence. They are of two kinds but cut of the same cloth: One is a blind adherence to the notion that education should not be political; the other is that education is a science.

EDUCATION AND POLITICS

Education is necessarily political in the fullest sense of the word: it is normative, designed to reflect and transmit society's values. It is the business of the body politic. It should be no surprise, then, that education also mirrors society's most important value conflicts. Particularly in heterogeneous communities, schools become the battleground for disputes about values. Censorship, sex education, reading instruction, textbook selection are the more visible manifestations. As Joseph Adelson has pointed out in a brilliant essay in Commentary, the public schools have become the arena in which the forces of modernity meet those of traditionalism. And the stakes are high:

> Among the values of traditionalism are: merit, accomplishment, competition, and success; self-restraint, self-discipline, and the postponement of gratification; the stability of the family; and a belief in certain moral universals. The modern ethic scorns the pursuit of success; is egalitarian and redistributive in emphasis; tolerates or encourage sensual gratification; values self-expression as against self-restraint; accepts alternate or deviant forms of the family; and emphasizes ethical relativism.[3]

The distinctions Adelson draws are accurate and far from trivial. Such a confrontation is fraught with difficulty and explains much of the distress and tension that has burdened the public schools over the past decade and one half. They have been swept into a political and cultural maelstrom without benefit of debate; that is, the modernist changes which influenced the schools were adopted as though they were technical rather than political. This is most clearly revealed in debates about sex education. Introduced as hygiene, sex education was an instrumental program designed to reduce venereal disease and teenage pregnancy. But no subject is more overtly and explicitly value-laden than sex education; it is no more a technical question than is the question of the existence of God. If

sex education is a part of a school's curriculum--as it is in most first-rate schools--first principles must be established. It is from first principles that curricular and pedagogical decisions flow, in sex education and the rest of the educational enterprise. But first principles are not themselves rationally derived. As Santayana said, "something not chosen must choose."

Because education is not simply a technical matter, the mechanical transmission of skills, it is important on occasion to remind ourselves what first principles might be in a continental democracy. And while philosophy is today out of fashion, I am convinced that education must serve some deeper purposes:

> o First, education must be conservative, for that is precisely the secret of a successful culture: to maintain the best of the past in the present and to project that best into the future. Education should not be primarily a matter of reform or revolution--though it may be that--but a means of discovery and preservation.
>
> o Second, education should be liberal. That is, it should fit men and women to lead lives of ordered liberty.
>
> o Third, education must be disciplined. It must spring from the learned disciplines within which we organize knowledge and lead to the self-discipline that is the hallmark of the free man or woman. Recognizing that the greatest slavery is to be a slave to passion, education inculcates self-discipline as it works from intellectual disciplines.
>
> o Fourth, education must be generative; it must encourage and develop the capacity for continued learning, self-mastery, and ultimately the ability to teach oneself. A mere mastery of basic skills--or even higher order skills--is empty. Education uplifts and liberates by opening avenues to creative potential.
>
> o Fifth, and finally, education must be the principal means of orderly, individual change, of turning children into adults, ordinary people into extraordinary people.

At more prosaic levels as well, education cannot escape the political realm. Because education commands a substantial share of public sector resources, it is itself the legitimate object of political discourse.

Political debate about education is often deplored but is a sign of institutional vigor; that people care enough to debate education issues reminds us that the issues are important. But the most important consequences of recognizing the political nature of education is the realization that different individuals and different levels of government have different interests, just as different interest groups do. And today, as in the past, a persistent danger is the tyranny of the majority.

The relationship between the national government and the states has been a source of friction, not alone because of clumsy administration (though that has exacerbated problems) but because of different purposes and goals. The tension between Washington and the states or between the states and localities is not exclusively the product of heavy-handed bureaucracy, insensitivity, and paternalism. Washington has a different agenda than the state capitals, and on occasion it has run at cross purposes to state interests. A failure to deal with these issues explicitly and openly leads to conflicts shrouded in ambiguity and confusion. Mountains of paperwork, rules and regulations, and mind-numbing procedures exist precisely because one level of government is imposing its will on another. To ignore this is to invite cynicism and mistrust.

In some instances the appropriateness of the imposition is clear: no clearer case exists than Washington defending the rights of racial minorities. But lines quickly blur: insistence that non English-speaking children receive special help becomes a bureaucratic nightmare when Washington specifies curricular and pedagogical approaches. Legitimate concern for handicapped children is turned into financial and administrative chaos when Washington cavalierly directs states to provide specified services but refuses to appropriate adequate funds.[4]

The confusion attendant upon these complicated, even impenetrable set of relationships, is a major barrier to education excellence. They produce bureaucratic and political barriers to any reasonable idea of institutional accountability.

They do so in part because education decision-making is at best badly fragmented, the product of a loose skein of decision-makers, many with veto power, few with the authority to actively initiate. In many suburban and rural areas some genuine correspondence between the political nature of education and the institutional form remains. In town meetings in New England, in village school board meetings in Oregon, in school committee meetings in Iowa towns, decision-making wears a human face. Citizens, school board members, teachers and principals know one another and thrash out compromises that have staying power. It is no surprise to find that thirteen years of Gallup polls confirm this: when asked to rate their schools, the most favorable response comes from residents of towns and villages.

Conversely, the decision-making process of the huge urban school district is as bureaucratic and remote as the giant corporation or federal agency: the inner city resident, particularly the poor, minority resident, is virtually removed from political participation. Gallup's other finding is equally no surprise: that portion of the population most unhappy with public schools is inner city blacks of the Northeast.

EDUCATION AS SCIENCE The other major barrier to education excellence is the obverse of the coin that refuses to recognize education's political nature, and that is the discredited idea that education is a science. It is not. It is an art, a systematic art perhaps, but not a science. But it is not the less for being an art.

To the layman, "education as a science" has a bizarre ring to it, but it was an outgrowth of the scientific management revolution of Frederick Turner. Most fully and effectively described in David Tyack's distinguished guished book The One Best System, this view of American education is almost uniformly accepted by historians and analysts. Science offered education both the prospect of legitimacy and the promise of success. As a science it dignified the teacher and rationalized the school. It recognized "modern" concepts of specialization of labor, division of function, hierarchical organization, and bureaucratic relationships.

But the errors of conceiving of education as a science are manifold and devastating. It led ineluctably to a mass production model in which the senior scientists of education design the product and methods of production and the workers implement a scientifically derived program. Students become the product, teachers the workers at the conveyer belt, principals the foremen, the superintendent the CEO, and the school board the corporate board of directors. The alleged benefits of such division of labor and specialization of function were economies of scale, careful quality control, and a uniform product.

This model is precariously close to certain concentrated domestic industries. The quality control is certainly uniform--uniformly low--just as the product is consistent--consistently poor.

The reason for this is that scientific management and its handmaiden, bureaucracy, have but one purpose: the institutionalization of the suspension of judgment. Their purpose is precisely to make the education process teacher-proof. But no room for error also means no room for excellence.

Teaching is a profession and its hallmark is making judgments: about what to teach and how to teach. Indeed, the decision to teach, if it means anything, is a moral affirmation, it is a statement about the importance of the community, its past and its future.

By stressing the non-scientific aspect of education I do not mean to suggest that it is unsystematic, a sort of happening that simply unfolds. Rather, education is better conceptualized using an orchestral than a commercial metaphor--the principal as conductor, the dean as first violin, and so on. Judgment, taste, sensitivity, interpretive power permit technical competence to be transformed into virtuosity.

EDUCATION AND VALUES

The twin ideas--that education is properly political and that education is more art than science--reinforce the obvious: education is value-laden. Its cultural purpose is to transmit values, values which themselves are politically, not scientifically, derived. In a homogeneous, hierarchically organized state the implications of this are also obvious and powerful: education becomes the servant of the state. It unabashedly and openly promotes state purposes. In the modern world, the clearest expression of this appears in

theocracies. For example, the education policy handbook of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia begins:

> In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate, the Education Policy in the Saudi Arabian Kingdom...
>
> The educational policy is the broadlines on which rests the educational process in fulfilling the duty of acquainting the individual with his God and religion and adjusting his conduct in accordance with the teaching of religion, in fulfillment of the needs of society and in achievement of the nation's objectives.[5]

In the secular, developed democracies of the West, such practice is no longer conceivable. To the contrary, in the great democracies, the state is the servant of the people, and education, no less than other social activities, is supported by the state, not to proselytize, but to enlighten. The commitment to the free interplay of competing ideas is serious and not rhetorical. The state's purpose in educating the young is to fit them for the duties of citizenship, not mold them in the state's image.

In a pluralistic society this vision of education places special demands on the state. In an earlier time, for example, the state of Oregon attempted to outlaw private schools by enacting a compulsory attendance statute that could be satisfied only by enrolling in a public school. Struck down in 1925, Pierce v. Society of Sisters made it abundantly clear that the state could not compel students to attend state schools. Not to put too fine a point on the matter, the question still remains as to the meaning of compulsion: does a compulsory attendance statute compel the poor to attend public schools? The question is not trivial and has received sustained attention by Stephen Arons. Indeed, his most recent book, Compelling Belief, makes a powerful case for state subsidized choice in education. And this is precisely the question that should be before the American public in the 1980s. In a pluralistic society does it make sense

to believe that only state owned and operated schools satisfy the states' obligation to educate the young?

The question is important for a set of collateral reasons as well. John Coons and Stephen Sugarman, in their provocative and thoughtful book Education by Choice raise the question with a different emphasis. Education's objectives and methods are indeterminate, they assert. Except at the highest level of generalization, we have agreement neither on what to teach nor how to teach.

As Coons and Sugarman see it, the issue is one of jurisdiction, not substance. Who should control the education of the child?, they ask. The adults with the child's best interests at stake, the parents.[6]

What are the policy implications of these conclusions? From the perspective of Washington, the first and most important is that education is a problem with national dimensions that does not necessarily lend itself to federal government solutions. As well, it suggests that some forms of federal education activity are more desirable than others. For example, federal programs that genuinely improve education without being intrusive are to be preferred to those that do intrude.

THE CONTEXT

Discrete policy actions, of course, take place in an historical and political context, and the symptoms of today's education troubles establish that context just as they have in the past. The opening of the West led to land grant colleges, the first World War to vocational education, the second World War to the GI Bill, Sputnik precipitated the National Defense Education Act, the civil rights revolution led to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. But what of today's problems? They are not hard to identify. Student test scores

have declined, citizen reluctance to increase education expenditures continues, test scores for new teachers and teachers in training are alarmingly low and public confidence in public education continues to falter. The premier issue of the 80s is excellence. Hardly a novel observation, one dimension of this new preoccupation is nevertheless not being considered with the care it deserves: As public school enrollments continue to decline, private school enrollments continue to increase. The absolute numbers are not large, but the percentages are striking; public schools have lost students at a rate of about two percent a year, while private school enrollment increases have been about two percent per year.[7] The issue of private school resurgence may be as significant in the 80s as Sputnik was in the 50s.

Interestingly, some residual confusion on the matter of private school enrollment remains, even though the evidence is increasingly solid. First, certain private schools are exhibiting remarkable growth; this has been obscured by the fact that Catholic schools, the biggest segment of the private school sector, lost more than a million students in the 1970s. The reasons are not hard to find: Catholics behave like other Americans. This means reduced family size and removal to the suburbs (where there are few Catholic schools).

As Catholic school enrollments fell (in parallel to public school declines) other private school enrollments rose dramatically. Over a ten-year period, for example, Quaker enrollment increased by 16%; conservative Jewish schools increased by 128%; non-parish Episcopal schools increased by 29%. And as Catholic schools were losing enrollments, minority enrollment in those schools rose dramatically; over the time period 1970-80

black enrollments rose by 12%; Hispanic enrollment increased by 12%; and Asian enrollment rose by an astonishing 222%.

Data on the fastest growing segment of private school enrollment--Christian schools--has been uneven and hard to find, because Christian schools have resisted being counted. Some reasonably good data is finally becoming available, and it is so striking that upon its release it was front page news in the New York Times, continuing to a half-page jump. The growth trends they report are remarkable:[8]

Growth in Religious Schools Other Than Catholic

| | |
|---|---|
| Northeast | 47.2% |
| North Central-Midwest | 49.1% |
| Middle Atlantic-South | 313.5% |
| West | 99.0% |

The changes in private school enrollment are, so far, only a small example of consumer preference for "excellence" in education. The nation's 16,000 independent school districts still enroll seven-eighths of the nation's children, and they will continue to do so unless the public schools falter and falter badly. There is still a substantial reservoir of good will on behalf of public schools, and as I have tried to suggest, they have the capacity to rise to the occasion. They can regain public trust and public confidence by delivering what the public wants: excellence in education.

FEWER SCHOLARS, FEWER DOLLARS

But the solution to the problem is not massive infusions of money. Public education over the past two decades has enjoyed unparalleled public generosity, and the key issue of the 80s and 90s is what can be done with

existing resources to effect real and lasting change. Hard choices must be made.

First, there are choices about funding. The issue is not simply one of economy--although that is important--but practicality. Massive infusions of financial resources to change the schools is simply not possible. But I am equally convinced that schools do not need massive infusions of new resources so much as they need comprehensive strategies for resource reallocation.[9]

There is already a small but growing literature in this field, and in the 80s and 90s, doing more with less is not just a virtue, it is a necessity.[10] In light of the enormous pressure on the state and federal budgets, not even the most bright-eyed optimists seriously expect that large infusions of new money are a realistic possibility. Gone are the halcyon days of the Great Society when we could talk seriously about guns and butter. That period of abundance was so great and prolonged that it became relatively easy to forget that the art of both economics and politics is making choices about the allocation of scarce resources.

The recent past is a harbinger of the future. For example, Medicare and Medicaid, in 1982, a $70 billion enterprise, doubled in the last five years. If present trends are simply extrapolated, the Medicare trust fund will be bankrupt in 1987; the cost containment proposals enacted by the Congress this spring may postpone the impending bankruptcy by a matter of months--no more. Imagine, then, an aging society, which has paid handsomely for education since the War, being asked to choose between schools and hospitals, teachers and doctors. The picture is not a bright one for education.

Professor Charles Benson of the University of California at Berkeley, one of the nation's premier school finance scholars, was recently asked if state expenditures would be increased to improve the schools. His laconic comment was to the point: "Only if the citizens of California march on Sacramento and demand a tax increase." In short, with the severe financial pressures facing the states and Washington, major funding increases for education are unlikely.

If no additional infusion of funds is likely, schools perforce must adopt Nietsche's formulation and "reconcile freedom with necessity." This suggests a set of major structural and organization changes that do not fall within Washington's area of responsibility: curriculum, entry and leaving standards (for teachers and students), school organization, class size, teacher licensing requirements. One very important change that is virtually cost-free (in dollar terms) has been advanced by Michael Kirst, Professor of Education at Stanford University and until recently president of the California State Board of Education. Kirst points out that the one major "quick fix" is within reach: colleges and universities may increase their admission requirements. THey may also do so by three devices: first, they may insist on breadth and depth requirements in high schools--no journalism in lieu of English, three years of math rather than two or one, foreign language and science requirements, and the like. Second, they may require higher grade point averages, and not just for the high school students' total course load, but in a core of required courses. Third, they can require higher scores on national examinations.

TESTING THE SCHOOLS

Indeed, the single most important thing that could be done to improve public schooling would be to carry college entry requirements to their logical conclusion and specify the "product". What is it that students can be required to know? Who may expect what of them? Although disappointing to some, the answer is not the government. What should be expected of students should be determined by the demands of continuing education and the workplace. The government can play a brokerage role, a catalytic role, a leadership role, but no more. This is revealed by the complexity of the problem; at a conceptual level, there is broad agreement about what society needs as a result of schooling. First, students--across the board--must be fully trained in the fundamentals. They must leave school able to read and write at a level consonant with their intellectual capabilities and interests as well as their vocational and further educational ambitions.

That means the ability to write simple prose, follow written and verbal instructions, and read materials essential to job mastery. Similarly, they must know arithmetic to a degree of proficiency that permits them to function adequately.

Second, young people must understand the demands and rewards of work. In the 1980s there is almost a quaint sound to the concept of a "work ethic" but it remains central to any form of accomplishment, intellectual, artistic, or material. And while a work ethic--Protestant, Confucian, or whatever--emerges organically from a whole culture, the school plays an important part in expressing and reinforcing it. A school communicates ideas like the "work ethic" not through didactic pedagogy but by example, by the school's hidden curriculum. A school that sets standards and

deadlines, expects high quality and timeliness, rewards success and penalizes failure, lets students know what a work ethic is and also that it is important.

Third, students need to know how to continue to learn. The "basics," as used by the Council for Basic Education, means continued learning, not mindless command of a set of skills learned by rote.[11] The capacity to continue learning is itself an acquired skill.

At first glance, this simple prescription appears to be reasonable, non-controversial, and wholly desirable; in fact, for generations, the joint mission of schools and the family has been to accomplish these objectives. But their consequences are very controversial because they lead inexorably to the measurement of school "output," student performance. Controversy arises because teachers do not want to be measured by what their students have learned, or worse yet, not learned.

Because the high school diploma no longer reveals what a graduate has learned, neither postsecondary institutions nor prospective employers have a ready measure of an applicant's absolute or relative proficiency. (Nor does the applicant.) In the case of students who go directly from secondary school to the workplace, the problem is particularly acute. The diploma provides the employer with little information about a student's substantive knowledge; of equal importance, it no longer provides a proxy for the employer's legitimate concern with work habits and attitudes. The high school diploma is, today, a document that provides little explicit information and less inferential information, excepting only the inference that the diploma means little or nothing.

The logical result of identifying measures of student performance is to establish standards, which will force an emphasis on quality in school

programs and will give some substance to the role of schools in certifying or attesting to their graduates' competence. Although the public at large welcomes such change, the education profession views it with apprehension. This deceptively simple change runs counter to the schools' traditional focus on inputs and process. Emphasis on output will require a major reorientation for schools because it leads inevitably to the issues of testing and measurement.

No subject in education is more intellectually interesting and more freighted with political baggage than testing--the measurement of student and school performance. On the one hand, objective measurement of accomplishment should serve the interests of the students, schools, and prospective employers. Properly conceived and administered, such measures can be used for diagnostic, prescriptive, and certification purposes. Indeed, the practice is already well established in law and medicine as well as among a wide variety of vocations; just as prospective doctors and lawyers are tested in most states, so are prospective beauticians, morticians, and carpenters.

The schools, however, have been reluctant to rely on objective measures of output.[12] As a group, teachers are particularly sensitive to the implications of testing: afraid that student test results will be used to measure teaching ability, teachers are reluctant to use external examinations. Similarly, civil rights advocates, concerned about poor showings by minority students, are apprehensive about testing, claiming racial or ethnic bias. (While IQ tests may be biased, how a test of algebra, or Latin, or biology might be biased for or against one or another racial group is a bit of a mystery; if achievement tests that rely on knowledge of standard English are in some subtle way biased, why such bias

is "wrong" is equally mysterious. One would assume that bias against ignorance and in favor of knowledge is the purpose of testing.)

The situation is replete with irony because much of American testing and measurement was part of a liberal reform impulse: independent, outside tests would be used to judge people by objective rather than subjective criteria.

Achievement testing and measurement (as distinct from IQ or ability testing), reconceived for the end of the century, offers the promise of a dramatic, low cost corrective for much of what is wrong with contemporary education.[13] Although "teaching to the test" is frequently used pejoratively, teaching to the "right" test can be a highly effective way to organize learning. Implicit in any test is a syllabus from which the test items are drawn; and external examinations, organized by subject matter, offer schools and teachers the opportunity to direct academic activities toward a known goal. Thus, ETS Advanced Placement (AP) examinations are administered nationally on the basis of known syllabi, and even the most remote school can direct its energies to preparing students for AP examinations.

The recent example of a Bolivian emigree teacher in the Chicano barrio of east Los Angeles is a case in point. The teacher was determined to prepare some of his students for the math AP exam:; he did so with a vengeance. So many passed that ETS insisted on retesting because the possibility of cheating was statistically high (ETS was accused of racism for its pains). Upon secured retesting, the teacher and his students were vindicated: no cheating (ETS was greatly relieved). The whole episode became national news. Why? Because poor Mexican students can do well on AP tests if they have excellent instruction. "Racist" test bias, if it

exists, may be of a special kind: a poor showing by minority students reveals the quality of instruction offered minority youngsters.

THE ROLE OF WASHINGTON

But the question remains: what role might Washington play in this environment? Strategies to increase school quality must deal with the realities of contemporary schooling. Highly decentralized, American public education is the responsibility of elected officials at the state and local level. Indeed, national "interests" in education are expressed through "national" education groups and associations rather than through a centralized ministry of education.

The challenge, then, is to identify reforms, the results of which offer promise of simultaneously reaching state and local officials as well as serving that national interest. In America, education policy is made helter-skelter, through complex but informal networks of decision makers, none of whom offer unequivocal leadership, but many of whom enjoy effective veto power. Thus, it is the rare reform which trickles down from Olympian heights. The examples of failed Great Society reform efforts are classics of the genre. Time after time, well-intentioned federal reform efforts have vanished, water into sand, when federal funding ceased.

Reforms that last are those appropriated by the local community. A proprietary interest in reform is essential for its adoption and retention.

The question of standards is of a piece with the historic role of the federal government in education: beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, the first purpose of the federal government's education arm was data collection. And today, the power of the computer, the sophistication of social science, the importance of policy analysis, and the readiness of

policy makers to make policy, together suggest that as a society we do something with the data we bother to collect.

The most important thing the federal government could do, then, would be to provide financial support for research and analytic activities (that individual schools or states cannot themselves support) to make sense out of ways to measure school performance and what use to put such measures to.

Even so prosaic an activity as data collection has its normative dimension. If we are to spend time and money to collect and arrange numbers, it is purposeful, not random. Data is gathered and displayed in an orderly fashion precisely because it should be put to some use.

EDUCATION AND PLURALISM

The conclusions to be drawn from this view of education are several: first, in a pluralistic society, education itself must be pluralistic and diverse. The interest of the state in education is to provide opportunity, not to proselytize or standardize the young. Public policies that reinforce diversity and choice are as valid at the elementary and secondary level as at the postsecondary. At minimum, the federal government should be neutral as to where families choose to enroll their children.

Second, recognition that there is a legitimate national interest in education is not to assert that there is a corresponding imperative for the national government to be interventionist. To the contrary, as I have tried to demonstrate, the art of educating children simply cannot be managed by Washington: our national span of control is not great enough. Neither can it be controlled by Sacramento or Albany or Tallahassee. Such attempts at control weaken and damage education. In our rush to national solutions we too often lose sight of this homespun truth. Today, in

education the greatest virtue of the national government will be self-restraint.

The reason for this is not hard to fathom. The problems faced by our schools are primarily structural and organizational. The issue is not how much money the schools should spend, but how they spend what they have. Once the tough decisions about resource allocation are made, decisions about increasing overall expenditures can be made rationally. For example, more money is spent in California high schools on driver education than on teaching reading. Now, it may be that in California it is more important to know how to drive than how to read, but that is a decision that should be made on its merits and not left to institutional inertia.

Similarly, the "crisis" in science and math education is attributable to a "shortage" of math and science teachers. There is no shortage, only a severe imbalance in supply and demand. Ironically, the liberal reaction has been a sort of social welfare supply side response: through teacher training and retraining institutes, loan forgiveness programs, and the like, math and science teachers will begin to trickle down into the classroom.

The one solution that would work immediately and dramatically is structural: pay qualified math and science teachers what the market requires. But this solution reveals both the limits of the federal role and the nature of the problem: the federal government cannot impose such a solution on the nation's schools. It can do no more than suggest it. Such a suggestion, of course, could be undergirded by research which explains the feasibility of such an idea; it could be based on documentation of existing cases of such practices (e.g., university law and engineering

schools, which already do this); the federal government might even underwrite a limited number of demonstration programs.

For the federal government to assume to do more not only involves self-deception, it is counter-productive. If the fifty states look to Washington to solve the problem, they exacerbate it by delay and misconception. The states must solve the problem of math and science instruction, not because they are more virtuous, but because the federal government cannot.

What this suggests is that ideas like choice, diversity, access, and local control are not simple-minded slogans but constitute a profound and lasting statement about the intrinsic nature of elementary and secondary education. Interestingly enough, it is an insight we have taken to heart in the area of postsecondary education. In that realm, national policy has been one which is student-centered rather than institution-centered, emphasizing choice, diversity, access, and institutional autonomy.

The claims advanced for choice programs, such as vouchers and tax credits, have largely missed the mark, since they emphasize only greater competition, responsiveness, and accountability. Admittedly these are important concepts, but they are not central, they are instrumental. Competition, accountability, and responsiveness for what purpose? To recreate a community of scholars. The virtue of choice is not that it will increase the efficiency of schools--though that would be a welcome dividend--but that a more satisfactory match between school and student would occur.

Indeed, economy is hardly the issue. Competition to control cost is the least of it. The real issue is that there is no consensus about what "good" education is. There is no "best way" to teach reading, or

mathematics, or writing, or moral values. But there are environments that teachers, parents, and students select which fit their sense of what is right and important.

John Coons and Stephen Sugarman argue convincingly that both the means and ends of education are indeterminate: As individuals and as members of institutions in a pluralist society, we can identify and support determinant means and ends, but the only overarching objective of the society as a whole is education of the child as that child's family conceives its best interests.

The conflicting demands made by a pluralist society cannot be satisfied by denying the pluralist premise: just as a uniform national policy on pedagogy denies pluralism, a uniform national policy on student aid affirms it. This is the course we have charted in higher education; we should at minimum give it serious consideration as we debate elementary and secondary education policy.

THE PRICE OF PARTISANSHIP American education has been seriously diminished by the cult of efficiency, the acceptance of the notion that education is a science, a technical activity beyond politics which transcends values. The effect has been to leave it to the tender mercies of the experts and professionals. The consummate irony is that many of them--or the ostensible leaders of the professionals--are themselves becoming intensely partisan; what they do not realize is that partisanship in education sows the seeds of its own undoing.

Partisanship is passionate devotion to a point of view, an ideology: it affirms the old saw that there are two sides to every question, a right

one and a wrong one and it asserts that it knows the truth. In contrast, recognizing that education is a part of the political process is to assert that there are no absolutes, no perfect answers. As a part of the political process any answer must be provisional, tentative, subject to further change. James Baldwin describes it as "reaching a truce with reality." Education as a part of the political process is of necessity ambiguous and indeterminate; by its very nature it cannot be subject to narrow, particularistic points of view, whether it be to support the nuclear freeze or support denominational prayer.

The fatal flaw in partisanship is that it is based on a gross majoritarianism, in which might is right: whoever has the votes controls the prevailing orthodoxy. But minorities with energy and conviction will not permit themselves to be treated in such a way. Splinter groups will form, schisms will occur, and those who initiated partisanship in the first instance will reap the whirlwind.

The surest way to bring American education to its knees would be to permit the public schools to become the captive of partisan ideology or for one political party to itself become the captive of an education interest group. Education, in its classical sense, is too fragile to withstand so bearish an embrace. It cannot tolerate such partisan politicization. The education enterprise would wither and die, as it invariably does in totalitarian states, to be replaced by training and indoctrination. But neither can it stand apart from the political process nor assert that it is privy to a "science" of learning.

Education is normative, and the fact that we do not have consensus on which values to impart, or even on how to impart them, does not mean that we cannot agree that values are central to education. What it does suggest

is an organic framework—an educational equivalent of federalism—that will establish the organizational arrangements within which values are imparted and secured. It is the one way available to retain the true meaning of the common school and to keep bureaucracy from leading to schools which represent, instead, the lowest common denominator.

## Endnotes

[1] James Coleman, Private Schools, Public Schools, and the Public Interest," in the Public Interest, no. 64 (Summer 1981); Andrew Greeley, Catholic High Schools and Minority Students, New Brunswick, N.J. and London: Transaction Books (1982); Michael Rutter et al, Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Children, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1979).

[2] See comments of Fletcher L. Byrom in Public-Private Partnership: An Opportunity for Urban Communities, New York: Committee for Economic Development (1982), p. 103.

[3] Joseph Adelson, "What Happened to the Schools?" Commentary, Vol. 71, no. 3, March 1981, p. 38.

[4] The federal role deserves brief comment. Federal expenditures amount to about 8% of all public education expenditures, an inconsequential portion of the total. Similarly, federal control of education is on the wane (as is federal funding). Indeed, the American commitment to "local control" is so pervasive that it is almost impossible to find supporters of an increased federal role. While some individuals and associations support increased federal funding, they do not support increased federal control. For a more detailed discussion, see Denis P. Doyle, Debating National Education Policy: The Question of Standards, Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute (1981).

[5] Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Higher Education, The Educational Policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, (1978).

[6] John E. Coons and Stephen D. Sugarman, Education by Choice: The Case for Family Control, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978.

[7] According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in 1979 American public schools enrolled 42,600,000, while private schools enrolled 5,000,000. By 1989, those numbers are expected to be 39,300,000 in public school, 5,600,000 in private schools--a 12% private school increase.

[8] For more complete treatment of this matter see Denis P. Doyle, "A Din of Inequity? Private Schools reconsidered," Teachers College Record, Vol 82, No. 4, (Summer 1981); Susan Abramowitz and Stuart Rosenfeld, eds., Declining Enrollment: The Challenge of the Coming Decade, National Institute of Education, U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C., 1979 (see particularly Chapter III, "Recent Enrollment Trends in U.S. Nonpublic Schools", Donald Ericson, et al); and most recently, Judith Cummins, Non-Catholic Christian Schools Growing Fast, The New York Times, April 13, 1983.

[9] See Denis P. Doyle, "We Can Limit Funds, Still Educate Better," Los Angeles Times, (March 23, 1982).

[10] See, for example, Michael Kirst, "How to Improve Schools Without Spending More Money" Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 64, No. 1 (September 1982); and Chester E. Finn, Jr., "The Drive for Educational Excellence: Moving Toward a Public Consensus", Change Magazine (April 1983).

[11] The term 'basic skills' has been debased by recent usage. I use it as the Council for Basic Education does: "the generative skills that are the building blocks of lifelong learning. The skills that lead to rational thought, analysis, the ability to draw inferences, and most important, to continue learning."

[12] There is some variety of opinion among school officials on this matter. The National Education Association, for example, is emphatically opposed to testing across the board--for teachers and students. To its credit, the American Federation of Teachers supports carefully crafted testing programs. See Albert Shanker, "The Nonsense of Attacking Education Tests," Washington Post, (October 19, 1980).

[13] For an interesting discussion, see Christopher Jencks and James Crouse, "Should We Replace the SAT?" The Public Interest, No. 67 (Spring 1982).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arons, Stephen. Compelling Belief: The Culture of American Schooling. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1983.

Abramowitz, Susan and Rosenfeld, Stuart, eds. Declining Enrollment: The Challenge of the Coming Decade, Washington, D.C., National Institute of Education, March 1978.

Adelson, Joseph. "What Happened to the Schools?" Commentary, Vol. 71, no. 3, (March 1981): 38.

Callahan, Raymond C. Education and the Cult of Efficiency. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

Choate, Pat and Epstein, Noel. "Workers of the Future, Retool! Nothing to Lose But Your Jobs," The Washington Post Outlook Section, May 9, 1982.

Coleman, James. "Private Schools, Public Schools, and th Public Interest," in The Public Interest, no. 64, Summer 1981.

Coleman, James, et al. High School Achievement: Public, Catholic, and Private Schools Compared. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1982.

The Condition of Education, 1981. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 1981.

Coons, John and Stephen D. Sugarman. Education by Choice: The Case for Family Control. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978.

Cummins, Judith. Non-Catholic Christian Schools Growing Fast. New York Times, April 3, 1983.

Denison, Edward F. Accounting for Slower Economic Growth: The U.S. in the 1970s. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1979.

Doyle, Denis P. Debating National Education Policy: The Question of Standards, The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, D.C., 1981.

-----. "A Din of Inequity? Private Schools Reconsidered," Teachers College Record, Vol. 82, no. 4, Summer 1981.

-----. "Can Confidence in Public Schools Be Restored?" Seattle Times, May 11, 1980.

-----. "Education and Values: A Consideration." College Board Review, no. 118 (Winter 1980-1981).

———. "The Flight from Public Schools: It's Not Racial, It's Middle Class." Los Angeles Herald Examiner, June 20, 1980.

———. "Going Private." London Times Educational Supplement, April 4, 1980.

———. "A New Decade for U.S. Education: Who Pays, Who Gains, Who Loses?" Los Angeles Times Opinion Section, December 30, 1979.

———. "The Politics of Choice: A View From the Bridge." In Parents, Teachers, and Children: Prospects for Choice in American Education, edited by Lawrence Chickering. San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1977.

———. "Public Policy and Private Education." Phi Delta Kappan 62, no. 1 March 23, 1982.

———. "We Can Limit Funds, Still Education Better," The Los Angeles Times, March 23, 1982.

Doyle, Denis P. and Levine, Marsha. "Myths and Shadows: Some Preliminary Observations on Education and the Private Sector in an Era of Limits." Paper prepared for Public Policy Week, December 1981, American Enterprise Institute, Washington, D.C.

Drucker, Peter F. "The Coming Changes in Our School Systems." The Wall Street Journal, March 3, 1982, p. 13.

Elam, S.M. A Decade of Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education, 1969-1978. Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappan Education Foundation, 1978.

Finn, Chester E. "A Call for Quality Education." Life (March 1981).

———. "The Drive for Educational Excellence: Moving Toward a Public Consensus." Change Magazine, Vol 15, No. 3 (April 1983).

Greeley, Andrew. Catholic High Schools and Minority Students, Transaction Books, New Brunswick, N.J. and London: 1982.

Jencks, Christopher and Crouse, James. "Should We Replace the SAT?" The Public Interest, No. 67, Spring 1982.

Kirst, Michael W. "How to Improve Schools Without Spending More Money," Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 64, No. 1 (September 1982).

Levine, Marsha and Doyle, Denis P. "Private Meets Public: An Examination of Contemporary Education" in Meeting Human Needs: Toward a New Public Philosophy, Jack A. Meyer, Ed., American Enterprise Institute, 1982.

National Center for Education Statistics. Student Use of Computers in Schools, Fall 1980: A Survey of Public School Districts.

National Research Council. "The State of School Science," Washington, D.C., 1979.

National Science Foundation and Department of Education. Science and Engineering Education for the 1980s and Beyond. Washington, D.C.: 1980.

Public-Private Partnership: An Opportunity for Urban Communities, Committee for Economic Development, New York: 1982, p. 103.

Rutter, Michael, et al. Fifteen-Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Children. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1979.

"Science at School," The Economist, October 10, 1981.

Shanker, Albert. "The Nonsense of Attacking Education Tests," The Washington Post, October 19, 1980.

Timpane, P. Michael. Corporations and Public Education in the Cities, Teachers College, Columbia University, May 1982.

Useem, Elizabeth. "Education and High Technology Industry: The Case of Silicon Valley." Paper prepared for the Institute for the Interdisciplinary Study of Education, Northeastern University, August 1981.

## The Author

Denis P. Doyle is Director of Education Policy Studies at the American Enterprise Institute and author of numerous articles on education which have appeared in the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, the Los Angeles Times, the Phi Delta Kappan, the Teachers College Record, and the Journal of the Institute of Contemporary Studies. He recently co-authored a major study of magnet schools which formed the basis of selected recommendations reported in the National Science Foundation study, Educating Americans for the Twenty-first Century.